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ABSTRACT

This document contains 14 reports on education reform in Africa. Research was carried out in the 1990s to better understand the dynamics and techniques of policy change. Questions explored included: What are some of the key elements in education policy reform in Africa? How effective have the tools available to USAID been in guiding and supporting education policy reform? and What new conceptual approaches and tools can assist USAID staff and host country partners to strengthen the policy reform process? The reports are as follows: (1) "Education Policy Development: A Brief"; (2) "An Approach to Constituency-Building for Policy Reform: Education Reform Support"; (3) "Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)"; (4) "Community Involvement in Education"; (5) Decentralizing Education Services"; (6) "Educational Information Management"; (7) "Educational Networking in Africa: Education Research Network of West and Central Africa (ERNWACA)"; (8) "Elements of Policy Formation"; (9) "Identifying Determinants of Educational Achievement and Attainment"; (10) "Improving Equity in the Classroom"; (11) "Improving the Experience of Girls in the Classroom"; (12) "Improving the Health of School Children"; (13) "Promoting Reform in Basic Education"; and (14) "Research To Determine How Education Affects Girls' Lives." The brief highlights some of the findings and lessons from the research and related pilot activities. Each report presents findings and implications related to its particular topic. (RT)

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Investments in Education: USAID Africa Bureau's Office of Sustainable Development, 1992-1999

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2

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Education Policy Development: A Brief

Support for education policy reform has been a goal of USAID for over a decade. For many staff dealing with basic education (and other sectors), the ability to provide policy reform support has entailed learning and interacting with partners in new ways.

AFR/SD supported a number of applied research activities in the 1990s to better understand the dynamics and techniques of policy change. The research dealt with the following broad questions:

- Based on past country experiences, what are some of the key elements in education policy reform in Africa?
- How effective have the tools available to USAID been (as of the mid-1990s) in guiding and supporting education policy reform?
- What new conceptual approaches and tools can assist USAID staff and host country partners to strengthen the policy reform process?

This Brief highlights some of the findings and lessons from the research and related pilot activities in-country that dealt with policy development in the education sector.

Education Policy Formulation

Each country has its own methods of policy development, influenced by various stakeholders, power relationships, and development goals. Through a series of country case studies AFR/SD identified broad differences in policy development between Anglophone and Francophone countries. Anglophone countries tend to rely on national commissions to solicit opinion and draft recommendations for policies. Francophone countries are more likely to follow a process that involves consultation controlled by the Ministry of Education. In both instances, policy recommendations are likely to emerge more as a lengthy list of general statements rather than a set of priority recommendations, or priority-setting criteria, to guide eventual decision making. Also, policy dialogue generally is confined to those periods when central ministries and/or funding agencies initiate the process—on-going discussion and review is rare.

Both approaches continue to operate, although consultation increasingly draws upon a wider body of opinion through NGOs and civic organizations. Further, the strong pressures for financial accountability and control have forced greater attention to the fiscal implications of policy recommendations. Finally, government and non-governmental sectors have greater policy development experience and this is producing more focused policies.

Using a variety of methods, field and desk research, direct observations, and discussions with peers in other agencies and working groups, AFR/SD identified seven requisites for policy reform. The first is conceptually the most important:

- Policy development is a process that is most effectively followed within the framework of a strategy, the fulfillment of numerous "steps," and flexibility.

The other requisites include:

- A good knowledge base about a specific problem or issue;
- Strong, stable leadership within the ministry of education;

- Consultative and participatory involvement of stakeholders;
- Realistic priorities and forging compromises between competing goals;
- Effective funding and government-wide collaboration;
- Generation of a social learning process and marketing of the national education vision;
- Continuity and interactive participation—even at the implementation stage.

These elements fit well with policy development approaches adopted in other social sectors, notably the health sector.

A Conceptual Approach to Policy Development

Since 1988 AFR/SD/HRD has supported host country policy reforms within the context of an approach known as Education Sector Support (ESS). ESS was developed in cooperation with African governments, donors and regional institutions to target education system reform and support country leadership. Based on this education sector support approach, AFR/SD developed its strategic framework for Africa in 1998. The promotion of systemic reform, the sustainability of reform efforts, and the effectiveness of schools and classrooms are its three guiding principles. ESS also relies upon a set of tools for guiding reforms in basic education. One of the basic tools available to USAID to promote policy reform has been non-project assistance (NPA). NPA is a form of foreign assistance that is not tied to specific projects. NPA provides support directly to government budgets to help overcome the transition costs associated with sector reforms. Using the various NPA mechanisms, USAID staff engage senior government officials and other key stakeholders in discussions about policies and issues of mutual concern, to help the government to make difficult financial and political decisions. Funds are disbursed to governments upon fulfillment of performance conditions. One of the successes of NPA has been to use U.S. funding to leverage the reallocation of national resources to and within the education sector, for improving primary education.

AFR/SD commissioned eight country case studies to monitor the effectiveness of NPA in changes in basic education. In addition, a synthesis report was prepared.[1] Overall, the case studies concluded that NPA met only some of its goals, that policy reform was more complex and politically charged than expected, and that the ability of USAID staff to engage ministry of education officials effectively and monitor changes varied greatly.

Key findings from the research were that NPA is most useful when the—

- government and donors agree on performance conditions and these reflect the country's education policy framework and strategy;
- government is committed to reforms and prepared to finance reforms; and
- ministry of education has the capacity and structure to deliver education services, including effective management and accounting systems.

UGANDA—An NPA Success Story

USAID's NPA and Project Assistance has contributed significantly to Uganda's effort to reconstruct the education system. NPA has improved the management of teachers by increasing salaries tenfold, establishing staffing norms, and redeploying qualified teachers to rural areas. Uganda has reformed its textbook procurement policy so that it is now based on free and fair competition, with over 50 private, national and international providers of learning materials. A national census of teachers and primary schools resulted in the elimination of over 6,000 absent teachers, saving the government $300,000/month.

Another aspect of contemporary education systems is the decentralization of governmental functions from

[1] Joseph DeStefano, et al., *Basic Education in Africa: USAID's Approach to Sustainable Reform in the 1990s.* Washington, DC, 1995

central to regional and district levels. AFR/SD documented one pilot education reform activity in Ethiopia, where decentralization was in full swing. The activity involved a participatory approach to framing and prioritizing key education issues with local stakeholders. While locally significant, the central government adopted neither the process nor outcomes. Nonetheless, the experience offered important lessons about the political dynamics of policy reform.

AFR/SD has developed and designed a variety of other tools to strengthen the management of information by education ministries and policy makers. Such tools include a computer-based program to aid ministry staff in the collection, analysis, and reporting of school-level data (ED*ASSIST) and a database on educational statistics in Africa (SPESSA) for basic and comparative information. A regional network (the Association for the Development of Education in Africa—ADEA) is disseminating these tools across the continent and other regions have used these tools as models.

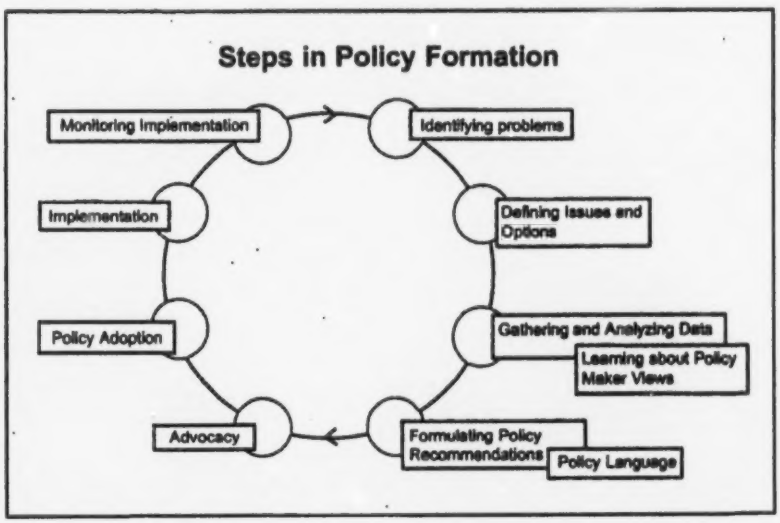
Strengthening the Strategy

The conceptual framework and analytical tools developed and tested by AFR/SD contribute to improvements in the overall approach to policy development. A set of activities known as Education Reform Support (ERS) sought to define in detail the techniques and actions needed to formulate and implement education policy. ERS focused on outlining methods and tools available to policy makers and policy influencers (such as policy analysts, program managers, advocacy groups, etc.) to build a constituency for policy change. The ERS outputs—a synthesis paper, backed by six analytical volumes—reinforce and consolidate the policy change findings of prior experiences. The materials emphasize the use of four tools—policy analysis, policy dialogue, advocacy, and social marketing—to generate information about reform issues and support for specific recommendations. These tools are described in relationship to one another and as part of a dynamic process.

Central Lessons

AFR/SD has generated a wealth of analytical and case materials on policy development. Lessons learned closely parallel those from other sectors and include:

- Policy development is a dynamic process.
- Effective policy change emerges from the long-term commitment of stakeholders.
- Commitment of stakeholders is generated by their active involvement in identifying problems and outlining options and recommendations.
- Solid evidence about problems and a good understanding of the policy change process and mechanisms promote realistic and feasible policy recommendations.
- A variety of information and motivational tools is available for sensitizing policy makers and other audiences, thereby building interest and commitment to policy change.
- Adopting a policy is half the battle; often the bigger challenge is implementing the policy.
- On-going monitoring of the policy and implementation processes is critical.



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Next Steps

AFR/SD has created a solid and carefully documented framework for promoting education policy change. A perpetual challenge is translating the framework and field experiences into practical guidelines for use by ministry of education officials, program managers, NGOs, regional research and advocacy groups, and USAID missions. Specifically, one can imagine an education policy development "how-to" manual and a series of workshops to help policy makers and implementers to be more effective in the education policy change process.

An Approach to Constituency-Building for Policy Reform: Education Reform Support

Findings and Implications for Basic Education

Countries involved in this activity: Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, South Africa

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What was the problem or gap being addressed?

Through studying the process of policy formulation, researchers, policy makers, and other education professionals have learned that effective policy formulation requires the informed deliberation of all stakeholders—those who will influence the implementation of policy as well as those who will be affected by policy decisions. However, the strategies and methods for facilitating such participation of stakeholders are neither well known nor available to policy makers in Africa. This activity addressed the lack of resource materials to guide missions and ministries of education in the formulation of policies.

Research findings

Analysis of prior experiences in education and other sector policy reform provided insights into policy change. The research added to existing evidence that policy development produces changes that result in winners and losers. The research found that policy change is thus a dynamic and very political process. AFR/SD published a six volume study that incorporates background and process materials for policy change. USAID/AFR/SD incorporated these findings into what is known as the Education Reform Support (ERS) approach to policy change. The approach outlines a process to promote policy change and emphasizes the importance of a flexible strategy to guide policy involvement.

Application of the findings

AFR/SD worked with USAID education programs in Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, and South Africa to introduce and apply the Education Reform Support methodology.

In Ghana, district education officers applied their experiences to generate information that fed into the formulation of basic education policy at the national level—in ERS terms, district-level stakeholders were brought into a national-level dialogue.

In Guinea, the statistics and financing units of the Ministry of Education received assistance in putting together information in ways that engage a broad spectrum of people in policy issues.

In Ethiopia, program staff developed a planning simulation model at regional and national levels.

In South Africa, the ERS methodology was consistent with the government's own approach to engage all the people in policy-making. The ERS process contributed to an education data management system that reflected and influenced government's affirmative action policies in providing educational opportunities.

In Malawi, AFR/SD staff have used ERS principles to help design a new Education Sector Investment Plan.

What lessons have we learned from this activity?

Support for education reform is a time and labor intensive activity. Effective technical support requires skilled facilitators and technicians who understand the political and bureaucratic context in which reforms might take place.

What are the next steps to capitalize on the activity?

AFR/SD should make available the ERS materials at the next AFR/SD workshop for USAID education programs. AFR/SD might introduce ERS to the ADEA Working Group or Education Sector Assessment.

The Research Triangle Institute, which prepared the six volumes on policy reform, has also developed software to help ministries plan large-scale policies and programs. This software needs to be integrated with the six volumes and perhaps used in the production of training modules in ERS. Finally, the concepts and principles of ERS need to be explicitly aligned or reconciled with those of other policy-oriented materials developed by AFR/SD. In doing so, AFR/SD should consider re-packaging the published volumes so the methodology is in a format that African audiences involved in the education policy development process can use.

Products

The published findings offer one of the most complete evidence-based statements for effective policy development and advocacy.

Crouch, Luis, Joseph DeStefano, and F. Henry Healey (February 1997), *Education Reform Support*, Volumes 1-6. Washington, DC: USAID, Bureau for Africa, Office of Sustainable Development.

This brief is one of 13 summaries of fuller impact assessments prepared for USAID/AFR/SD SO 6 (Education). For a copy of the impact assessment upon which this summary is based, or for other assessments, contact the Support for Analysis and Research in Africa (SARA II) Project at the Academy for Educational Development.

Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)

Findings and Implications for Basic Education

Countries involved in this activity: Regional

What was the problem or gap being addressed?

Many sub-Saharan African education systems suffer from under-funding, mismanagement, and isolation. In the mid-1980s, persistent low rates of literacy and primary school enrollments in Africa became a concern to international donor agencies. For example, the World Bank in its 1988 policy report, *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, identified a lack of African participation and of donor coordination on policy issues in education as major gaps in international assistance to African ministries of education. The World Bank addressed these gaps by rallying partners such as USAID to set up the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA).

In 1992 the ADEA moved to the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) at UNESCO in Paris. ADEA's role is to be a network server for groups in Africa, building education research capacity, facilitating the dissemination of research findings and information relevant to African education systems, and assisting in coordinating government and donor inputs to education. A steering committee and a growing number of working groups evolved.

From its beginning, the ADEA required financial and technical support from funding agencies such as USAID. Since the late 1980s, USAID/AFR/SD has contributed to building the research and policy dialogue capacity of ADEA and African ministries of education through the secretariat and numerous working groups. AFR/SD played a major role in a recent assessment of ADEA's management and use of the working groups to strength the organization's systems to inform and influence education policies and programs.

Research and analysis

Research, analysis, and capacity building occur through ADEA's working groups. Each working group is comprised of African members with an interest in the group's topic, along with representatives of the donor and/or lender organizations that support the working group. The groups generally meet at least twice a year. AFR/SD's role has been to help build the capacity of the groups to undertake appropriate research.

AFR/SD supported two research activities designed to describe how education policies have evolved in various countries. The first, a review of five country cases (Botswana, Mali, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda), examined the history of policy-making from colonial times to the present. The second, a review of six country cases (Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Mauritius, Mozambique, Uganda), looked at the processes used to formulate education policy reform packages in countries at different stages of sectoral evolution. The publications based on these research activities aimed to assist African educators in policy-making processes and to engage them in a dialogue on those processes.

The participation of AFR/SD staff in working groups has included—

1. The Education Statistics working group. AFR/SD staff assisted in three activities: (i) developing a computerized model for analyzing education data from all sub-Saharan African countries; (ii) implementing, in Benin, a system for linking Fundamental Quality Level Indicators (FQLs) at the school level to monitoring and evaluation systems at the central level; and (iii) through the ABEL project, creating a software shell and a training component to input and analyze national-level data on education.

2. Education Sector Assesment working group. AFR/SD has supported the review of education sector assessments to build research capacity and strengthen r e - searcher collaboration. The review process achieved two significant results: confirmed that the process can be disseminated through South-South exchanges; and, helped inform the planning of AFR/SD's strategic framework and analytic agendas.

3. Education Finance working group. AFR/SD staff helped to prepare an agenda and work plan to launch the activities of the group. The group now works closely with ministries of finance.

4. Capacity Building in Education Research and Policy Analysis working group. AFR/SD supported this group as a way to facilitate their work with the Education Research Network of West and Central Africa (ERNWACA) and the Educational Research Network in Eastern and Southern Africa (ERNESA). In July 1998, the SARA project enabled several ERNWACA members to attend a meeting of researchers. This allowed the members to meet with other African researchers and policy makers to discuss, on the basis of concrete research papers, the applicability of research to policy concerns.

5. Teaching Management and Professional Support working group. AFR/SD staff shared its expertise in teacher management and helped the group define teacher motivation studies and a qualitative approach to getting information. AFR/SD also helped define issues and approaches that the group used in hosting gender awareness workshops.

6. Early Childhood Development working group. AFR/SD helped to establish this group, but has not been active in the group.

7. AFR/SD staff have also worked closely with the ADEA's secretariat to plan Task Force meetings, which are attended by ministers and other high-level education policy makers.

What lessons have we learned from this activity?

- Financial and technical support to regional organizations can create access for USAID to organizational decision-making.
- A long-term commitment to an organization is often necessary for the organization to become soundly established.
- The working group structure of ADEA permits technical input and review of research findings, tools, and methods before their submission to policy makers, and dialogue between technicians and policy makers.
- Structured informality provides access to stakeholders and ready exchange of information and ideas.

What are the next steps to capitalize on the activity?

AFR/SD should review its strategy for supporting ADEA, based on a review of available options for best working with African ministries of education.

Products

AFR/SD provided substantial financial and technical support to the production of two reports of case studies on policy formulation:

Evans, David R., ed., *Education Policy Formation in Africa: A Comparative Study of Five Countries*, ARTS Technical Paper No. 12, June 1994.

Association for the Development of African Education, *Formulating Education Policy: Lessons and Experiences from sub-Saharan Africa*, October 1995.

In addition, AFR/SD supported the production and dissemination of ADEA quarterly newsletters.

A database was created which incorporates information on the activities of each donor agency (available on diskette). New software tracks the activities of each working group, and a program was created for collecting and analyzing education statistics (SPESSA) which served as a prototype for a worldwide database funded by USAID.

ADEA maintains a website to electronically connect ministers of education and the ADEA secretariat.

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Community Involvement in Education

Findings and Implications for Basic Education

Countries involved in this activity:
Malawi, Mali

What was the problem or gap being addressed?

School is not an integral part of community life in many parts of Africa, especially in rural areas. Frequently, it is an institution that draws a child out of the community and, if the child succeeds in school, into jobs in the modern sector. Likewise, the school does not support the community by providing children with the skills to contribute to its maintenance and development.

Growing recognition of the problems caused by this disjuncture exists between community needs and the school; likewise, a growing desire is evident to more fully match the interests of the two. Community schools are considered one option for addressing this problem. Community schools can also help to alleviate the financial burden on the government for schooling by transferring some of the costs of education to local communities. The question has been: how to create schools that provide a good quality education that remains affordable to local communities?

While well-known community school projects have been established in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, Colombia, and Guatemala, few existed in sub-Saharan Africa, and none were known to be receiving international support. Reports of large, successful programs have been published, but that information often does not reach the grassroots level.

This activity sought to overcome the information gaps of program planners in Africa about experiences with community participation in schooling. It sought to make the information readily available to meet a growing number of requests from the field for information about community participation in operating schools.

The activity addressed the information gaps by—

- Reviewing community schools projects in Mali and Malawi to evaluate cost-effectiveness, sustainability, and pupils' ability to move into the regular school system at higher grades.
- Comparing cognitive achievement in community and government schools and determining why these results were obtained.
- Sharing information about community schools programs with educators and others interested in how community schools function.
- Developing a software package on experiences with community participation for program planners.

Research Findings

The research on community schools and community participation in schooling shows that results of these experimental efforts are positive. The Mali and Malawi evaluations found that while test scores in both government and community schools were low, children in the community schools performed as well or better than children in government schools in all core subjects. In addition, repetition and dropout rates were lower, and progression rates were higher in the community schools. Analysis of factors that account for the differences between government and community schools ruled out household and child characteristics. School-level effects, including teaching methods, teacher supervision, class size, and use of instructional time seemed to affect test scores. Information on costs was inadequate, so the researchers could not draw conclusions about either immediate costs or financial sustainability.

What lessons were learned from this activity?

Community schools are introduced and supported in different ways, depending on the environment. Policies to support community schools must be based on knowledge of these differences; no single policy can be promulgated throughout Africa. The innovative nature of community schools in Africa requires further study and assessment in order to inform decision makers at all levels to promote greater use of and to ensure quality of community schools.

Great value exists in continually updating information on what is happening with innovative interventions. The community schools in Mali have raised an issue of continuity within the school system: students are not passing the sixth grade leaving exam and thus not qualifying for secondary school. On-going monitoring of projects and initiatives will widen our ability to inform and support other community initiatives. Likewise, the community participation software needs more follow-up monitoring and fuller integration with programs.

What are the next steps to capitalize on the activity?

AFR/SD has already embarked on a follow-up software package that will guide planners in actually putting together a program, collecting data, and mobilizing support. The World Bank has commissioned a similar tool for girls' education. New software packages should incorporate up-to-date information and lessons.

The development of the community participation software program involved a thorough search for unpublished and published literature on community participation activities. The information was categorized around three dimensions: goals, strategies, and context. The user is able to search for particular goals (such as increase efficiency or improve quality), context (cultural factors, government practices), and strategies (improving the teacher, improving community infrastructure and technologies).

AFR/SD has completed a comparative study of two models of community schools (Save the Children and World Education), including their costs. This will be used to influence policy decisions.

Other suggestions include (1) repackaging the findings from these studies for wider distribution, and (2) producing a video on community participation.

Products

Williams, Jim, and Brad Strickland, *Field Study of Malawi Community Schools* (Save the Children, in Mongochi), December 1996.

DeStefano, Joseph, *Community-Based Primary Education: Lessons Learned from the Basic Education Expansion Project (BEEP) in Mali*, AFR/SD Technical Paper 15, 1996.

USAID, *Planning for Community Participation in Education*, SD Publication Series, Office of Sustainable Development, Africa Bureau, USAID, Washington, DC, 1997.

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Decentralizing education services

Findings and Implications for Basic Education

Countries involved in this activity:
Regional

What was the problem or gap being addressed?

The decentralization of education services has often been viewed by donor and lender organizations as a solution to a wide range of problems, including—

- Insufficient government responsiveness to local education needs.
- Poor popular participation in improving schooling, especially among disadvantaged ethnic and social groups.
- Inflexible planning and implementation, due to poor knowledge of regional and local conditions.
- Managerial overload at the central level.
- Failure to tap resources at the regional and local levels.
- Inadequate support for non-governmental organizations and private enterprises in education.

On the heels of a wave of enthusiasm for decentralization in the early 1990s among donor and lender organizations came a growing number of questions about the feasibility and benefits of such a policy. Some advocates suggested that decentralization was a single-policy panacea for alleviating a number of political, bureaucratic, and economic problems. The opinions of people and organizations in favor or skeptical of decentralization often were supported by little evidence, making appropriate decisions on broad policy and specific program approaches more difficult. AFR/SD developed this activity to document some of the experiences and outcomes of decentralization in basic education.

Research findings

The researchers concluded from a review of case study and project literature that the decentralization of education systems is not as easy as the rhetoric suggests. Decentralization was found to be an extremely complex process and large information gaps remained. Most USAID education projects identified decentralization as a priority objective, but only a few analyzed the process of decentralization (including the capacity and politics of key actors) and examined the education sector in a systematic way.

The review summarized the findings within four categories:

Assumptions and views: Decentralization is viewed as an end, rather than as a means to an end, and as finite, rather than as an ongoing process. It is assumed to always be beneficial and to have popular support; in fact, it is often contentious.

Process: Decentralization often emerges from crisis. It rarely is designed with popular participation, rarely builds organizational linkages or taps into indigenous social institutions, and rarely extends to the school level.

Support: As support and opposition to decentralization are highly politicized, NGOs are often a better point of entry than the government. Good local management practices can maximize support for decentralization. Donors favor broad decentralization policies, yet rarely fund such efforts.

Evaluation: Evaluations of decentralization efforts are virtually non-existent, beyond simple descriptions. Evaluations focus on formal plans rather than on their implementation and fail to discuss the costs of decentralization.

The implementation of decentralization has shown that such policies are mired in other political and economic agendas. Decentralization is not as universally acceptable a solution as some have thought, and key stakeholders often have something to lose by its implementation.

Researchers in a Tigray, Ethiopia, project reported:

- Communication flowed down, not up. This drastically reduced the awareness of people at higher levels about the conditions facing schools and of differences between schools.
- Within the region, teachers, textbooks and other resources were unevenly distributed among schools, with access largely determined by proximity to main roads.
- With decision-making authority over even relatively small concerns concentrated in the hands of the regional officials, local and school officials had to wait months for responses to routine requests.
- Regional officials and school officials had different priorities: the former wanted to speed up construction of school buildings, while the latter wanted more books and teaching materials.
- Local education officers had only the most basic training for their jobs, and there was little consistency in their day-to-day activities. Their job was not well defined.

What lessons have we learned from this activity?

Decentralizing basic education services requires significant changes in power and authority relationships. The work in Ethiopia showed that it may be too much to expect that people will reorganize their job descriptions simply because research shows that alternatives may be more efficient.

Decentralization is a means to increase the availability and quality of education services, not an end in itself.

A variety of constraints affect USAID and other outside agencies that assist in implementing structural changes required by decentralization. Often, too little information is available to guide policies or initiatives. In addition, ministry of education officials at all levels may not be fully informed about nor accept ownership of the decentralization process.

What are the next steps to capitalize on the activity?

AFR/SD needs to decide whether to pursue research and technical assistance in decentralization. If so, staff must work with ministry officials to further explore feasible means of devolving structures of authority for specific purposes. AFR/SD's service will be most effective where ministry officials take the lead.

AFR/SD might also consider using the research reports from Ethiopia and Ghana to develop training materials on decentralization for wider use in Africa.

Products

Whitacre, Paula, and Manish Jain, *Education Decentralization in Africa: As Viewed through the Literature and USAID Projects*. Washington, DC: Support for Analysis and Research in Africa (SARA) project, Academy for Educational Development, 1997.

Whitacre, Paula, and Marc Sommers, *Decentralizing Education: The BESO/Tigray Case Study: A Summary*. Washington, DC Support for Analysis and Research in Africa (SARA) project, Academy for Educational Development, 1996.

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Educational Information Management

Findings and Implications for Basic Education

Countries involved in this activity:
Benin, Lesotho

What was the problem or gap being addressed?

The lack of reliable data on education systems and difficulties in collecting and analyzing those data have plagued ministries of education for decades. In many countries, the ministry of education does not know how many children are in school, where schools are located, how many teachers are actually in the classrooms, what the student: teacher ratio is in each school, how many children are progressing, repeating, dropping out, and so on. Without such information, planners can neither project accurately the costs of providing education to children, nor anticipate the education sector's changing needs. They cannot make thoughtful decisions on how to allocate scarce resources. At the international level, education professionals require good-quality data to make comparative analyses among countries and to help governments determine macro-level policies for providing education. The purpose of the activity was to develop a set of analytical tools to assist ministries of education to collect, analyze, and report on situations where reliable data did not exist.

Outcomes of this activity

A software package (ED*ASSIST) and a computerized database (SPESSA) were developed and distributed.

ED*ASSIST is a software package designed to assist education planners to—

- Gain faster access to information.
- Support decentralized information processing and access.
- Integrate the key components of the information processing cycle.
- Increase the ease of use and dissemination capacities of information systems so that current non-participants—such as schools, provincial and district education offices, NGOs, etc.—can become active participants in the information flow.
- Increase the sustainability of the system.

ED*ASSIST was pilot tested in Benin at the invitation of the Ministry of Education in 1996. In less than a year, and with limited programming and staff, the ministry was able to catch up with a three-year backlog of reporting. The knowledge gained from this on-the-ground experience led to software upgrades. In 1998, two ministry staff members from Lesotho were trained to use the software. It is expected that similar training will be provided to groups in Kenya and Uganda.

SPESSA (Statistical Profile of Education in sub-Saharan Africa) is a computerized database of education data that gives planners and others in education—

- Easy access to the ADEA's database of 80 indicators related to education in sub-Saharan Africa.
- A program to create graphics comparing data across years and across countries.

In addition, USAID's Africa Bureau Office of Sustainable Development (AFR/SD) prepared a training module in the use of Fundamental School-Level Quality (FQL) indicators for gathering the most appropriate data for analysis.

What lessons were learned from this activity?

AFR/SD staff and consultants have found that getting ministries to use SPESSA, ED*ASSIST, and other NESIS products is more difficult than they first envisioned. ED*ASSIST requires a high level of technical support for both product development and application. Yet contractors tend to use their proprietary products, which makes inter-organization collaboration difficult. In general, no one has figured out how to develop a useful and sustainable education management information system (EMIS).

- Good products take a long time to develop. To help ensure that products are useful to ministries, and that ministries actually use them, ministry staff members need to be more fully involved in the development of those materials.

- The barriers to improving planning and EMIS may be political, not technical; thus careful advocacy, networking, and planning are needed.

What are the next steps to capitalize on the activity?

AFR/SD needs to look closely at the barriers blocking ministries from using these support packages. It then needs to develop workable procedures for identifying what kinds of requirements, including technical assistance, ministries have for beginning to use the packages. The packages need to be shaped, promoted, and disseminated accordingly. AFR/SD could help ADEA in these tasks.

Products

ED*Assist computer model

Statistical Profile of Education in sub-Saharan Africa (SPESSA) database

Training module on Fundamental School-Level Quality (FQL) indicators.

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Educational Networking in Africa: Education Research Network of West and Central Africa (ERNWACA)

Countries involved in this activity: Regional

Findings and Implications for Basic Education

What was the problem or gap being addressed?

Education policy makers in Africa do not always make good use of data in policy decisions. A large part of the problem lies in the dearth or inaccessibility of good-quality, relevant research. Some believe that this problem stems from the inadequate number of well-trained researchers who belong to an active research community. Without such a community, researchers lack the intellectual stimulation and familiarity with current research issues needed to sustain their professional work.

AFR/SD decided to enhance policy-oriented research on education in West Africa by supporting the Education Research Network of West and Central Africa (ERNWACA). The network received seed money from Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC) because it was seen as a potential network of educational researchers in West Africa. Initially, ERNWACA operated out of the IDRC office in Dakar. In 1993, ERNWACA established an independent secretariat in Bamako. Member countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Despite the early expectations, ERNWACA floundered as a network. Creative leadership was needed, as was the capacity to generate revenue to sustain the secretariat.

Through ERNWACA, AFR/SD intends to foster a community of researchers, to build their research skills, to link their research to issues on the agenda of policy makers, and to strengthen the dissemination of research methods and findings among researchers themselves. AFR/SD aims to provide support through financial and technical assistance to the network's secretariat.

Research outcomes

The ERNWACA national chapters identified over 1000 studies dealing with aspects of education. Most of these were unpublished and the information was unavailable to other researchers and decision makers. The SARA project assisted in publishing a synthesis of these studies, entitled *Overlooked and Undervalued.*

The book dealt with the following research themes:

- Educational finance and administration
- Learning and attrition in formal education systems
- Teachers and teaching
- Education and socio-economic integration
- Nonformal and traditional education
- Educational reform.

What lessons were learned from this activity?

Where ministry of education staff conducted the research, self-interest often took precedent over objectivity. Thus, in building the ERNWACA network, care is needed to assure that research findings accurately reflect realities without distortions arising from bureaucratic and political perspectives.

Support for this and other regional networks can be enhanced by closer collaboration in the selection of research topics and of researchers themselves.

ERNWACA as a regional network can only be as strong and productive as its individual country members. These country groups did not receive the financial support from USAID (REDSO) that they expected. Also, changes in secretariat directors, managerial support, and technical leadership have prevented the network from performing as expected. Thus, if investment in ERNWACA is to pay off in terms of good policy research, AFR/SD must help to ensure that its staff, the secretariat, and IDRC (which is a large funder and supporter) do what is needed to provide managerial, financial, and technical support to the country groups.

What are the next steps to capitalize on the activity?

AFR/SD is currently working with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) to try to ensure continued and more effective support to ERNWACA.

Products

Overlooked and Undervalued: A Synthesis of ERNWACA Reviews on the State of Educational Research in West and Central Africa. Washington, DC: Support for Analysis and Research in Africa (SARA) Project; Health and Human Resources Analysis for Africa (HHRAA) Project, USAID/AFR/SD, 1997.

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Elements of Policy Formation

Findings and Implications for Basic Education

Countries involved in this activity: Regional

What was the problem or gap being addressed?

The core recommendation of the World Bank's 1988 policy study on education in sub-Saharan Africa was that each country formulate and implement an internally coherent set of policies in the education and training sector. According to that recommendation, creating effective education systems in Africa ultimately depended on African governments' ability to develop coherent education policies, and to translate them into realistic investment and implementation plans. Donors working in African education also realize that viable national education policy frameworks are essential prerequisites for effective donor-government cooperation in education.

Officials of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) perceived that key policy makers in some ministries of education in Africa did not know how to formulate policy effectively: issues to consider, stakeholders to include in deliberations, fora, action sessions to convene, and so on. ADEA and its AFR/SD colleagues thought that these individuals would benefit from studying the history of policy formation in their own countries and in other African countries.

Research findings

The case studies permitted AFR/SD and ADEA staff who had organized the case studies to draw some generalizations about the historical policy formulation processes in Africa. Seven requirements of an effective policy formation process were identified, including—

- A good knowledge base.
- Strong, stable leadership.
- Consultative and participatory processes.
- Realistic priorities and forging compromises between competing goals.
- Effective funding and government-wide collaboration.
- Generation of a social learning process and marketing of the national education vision.
- Continuity and collaboration among partners—continuing through the implementation stage.

What lessons were learned from this activity?

Knowledge and understanding of how policies have historically been developed in a particular country or region can clarify for policy makers, advocates, and donors the key features of national processes. Thus, case studies are a useful first step in understanding national policy-making processes. Additional discussion and application of the findings with advocacy and policy-oriented groups can expand the usefulness of the research. The process of collaborative research and writing between African and USAID researchers reaffirms the capacity-building benefits of such collaboration.

What are the next steps to capitalize on the activity?

The information generated in this study and the complementary activities on policy development and reform processes are valuable for a wider audience than has been targeted to date. Along with information and experiences gained on policy development in the public health sectors of AFR/SD and through the SARA project, hands-on manuals and short summaries are options for consolidating such information.

Products

Evans, David R., ed., *Education Policy Formation in Africa: A Comparative Study of Five Countries*, ARTS Technical Paper No. 12, 1994.

Debourou, D., and K. Fobih, P. Kamano, P Selwyn, F. Massingue, K. Amoti Wa Irumba, *Formulating Education Policy: Lessons and Experiences from sub-Saharan Africa*, ADEA, AFR/SD, 1995.

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Identifying determinants of educational achievement and attainment

Findings and Implications for Basic Education

Countries involved in this activity:
Egypt, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, South Africa, Tanzania

What was the problem or gap being addressed?

African governments are committed to providing all children with a good-quality, basic education. However, governments are strapped for the resources to fulfill this promise and they must make critical choices about how to invest the scarce resources available for basic education. Similarly, the international funding agencies that support these governments want to know how different budgetary allocations within the sector will affect educational and developmental outcomes. This knowledge requires accurate information on cause and effect links within the education system (for example, of textbooks on student achievement, of different kinds of training on teachers, of classroom facilities on enrollment). From the perspective of enrolling more children in school, educators must also know what affects demand for schooling—what financial and other incentives and barriers affect parents' decisions about which of their children, if any, to send to school. In the 1980s, some institutions, notably the World Bank, began intensive research on these questions, but the variation in context from country to country is vast and data were far from sufficient to generate conclusions about all of Africa. There was (and is) a need for more empirical data on factors that affect the demand and supply of good-quality schooling.

Research findings

Four studies used existing sample survey data to look at the broad question of whether socio-economic conditions (influencing demand) or school quality conditions (influencing supply) have a greater effect on student achievement in school and in the workplace. Some of the studies looked more closely at the supply question, notably: What particular factors of school quality affect student achievement?

- The study in Egypt focused on why education indicators of enrollment, completion, and test scores had declined since the mid-1980s. The conclusion was that most of the change in these variables could be accounted for by socio-economic and context variables rather than school-level variables. The deteriorating standards of living for most households forced parents to keep their children out of school and in the labor market more often and to pay fewer expenses associated with schooling. The researchers were not able to explain, however, the extent to which a school's quality influences parents' decisions to support schooling. At what point—in costs and in school quality—does schooling become more attractive than the labor market?

- The research in South Africa asked what effects school quality has on various educational outcomes. The study found that as pupil-teacher ratios improve, so do enrollment rates, persistence rates, test scores, and parents' expenditures on education. Schooling improved opportunities in the labor market: hourly earnings and family income increase with test scores, years of schooling, and household head's schooling.

- In Tanzania, rates of return to both primary and secondary schooling were low enough to perhaps decrease demand for schooling, even if supply was adequate. In particular, while parents can often afford the direct costs of primary (though not secondary) school, they cannot afford the opportunity costs, especially of girls. The data included no useful information on school quality.

- The study in Kenya asked (1) what were the effects of school costs on a decline in primary enrollment since the early 1990s, (2) what were the trade-offs between investing in more schools versus lowering the pupil-teacher ratio, and (3) how these effects vary with levels of income. The research found that investing in more

schools raises the enrollment rates among poor families, but that improving pupil-teacher ratios lowers the enrollment rate among these same families. The data were insufficient to explain this finding.

The five evaluations of specific interventions asked various questions about the effect of those interventions on student achievement.

- In Kenya, it was found that the program of the Dutch NGO Internationale Christelijke Stichting (ICS), which offered textbooks and uniforms to randomly chosen primary schools in a rural area, had a positive effect on enrollment, attendance, and dropout rates, but did not affect test scores.

- Studies in Malawi and Mali compared cognitive achievement of students in a pilot program in rural community schools sponsored by Save the Children Foundation (SCF) with those of students in government schools. The studies looked at, among other things, the effects of community participation in and cost-effectiveness of each of the systems. In both countries, children in SCF schools performed as well or better than children in government schools in core subjects. Repetition and dropout rates were lower and progression rates were higher in SCF schools. Available data suggest that absenteeism was also lower. In Malawi, these results appear attributable to better and more frequent supervision, smaller class size, better use of instructional time, and emphasis on core subjects. Community participation, however, was limited to school construction—not very different from government schools. In Mali, government school students may have been disadvantaged by their use of French or also because 30 percent of government school classes in the sample were multi-grade classes.

- An Aga Khan Foundation program in Kenya aimed to help teachers use child-centered techniques to develop pupils' cognitive and problem-solving abilities. The impact of the program on test scores was mixed.

- A study in Tanzania assessed the impact of matching grants to communities to improve their schools (with a secondary benefit of shifting some of the burden of expense from the national government to communities). It was found that parents' contributions increased substantially in response to the matching grant incentive; teachers, as directed, did develop acceptable plans and kept detailed records of expenses; and the scheme generated enthusiasm among teachers and parents. The expense and logistical requirements for monitoring the program, however, fostered doubts that it could be implemented on a large scale.

What lessons were learned from this activity?

Although the research produced some interesting results, the studies do not seem to have been designed with clear policy issues in mind. It would be better to invest in studies that are clearly related to pressing issues than to use existing data that is off the issue. Studies of specific interventions appear to be more useful for policy makers than do studies using standard survey data.

What are the next steps to capitalize on the activity?

The findings from this empirical research seem to have some value in guiding policy and programming, but the findings need to be related more explicitly to policy issues. One task would be to establish such links, bringing together in a small workshop ministry of education planners and supervisors to apply the lessons to the processes and structures in their own countries. Another task would be to disseminate the research studies to a targeted audience for specific advocacy purposes.

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Improving Equity in the Classroom

Findings and Implications for Basic Education

Countries involved in this activity: Ghana, Malawi, Namibia

What was the problem or gap being addressed?

Millions of children are deprived of access to a basic education because they are girls or live in remote rural areas. While they represent a large portion of the population, these children fail to learn to read and write and acquire the basic skills that will increase their contributions to their communities. Education specialists have been challenged to devise strategies and interventions that increase the access, persistence, and achievement of girls and rural children at the primary school level. However, information on inequalities and on past efforts to promote equity has been difficult for planners to obtain.

To fill this gap in knowledge, the activity sought to highlight strategies—drawn from USAID experiences—that help to improve the equity of educational opportunities between girls and boys and between rural and urban children. Two studies evolved:

- an assessment of the effectiveness of USAID non-project assistance as a means to influence the design and implementation of reforms to improve girls' participation in schooling; and
- a review of experiences of USAID education equity reform at primary school levels in Malawi and Ghana.

Research findings

The findings of the studies varied in their scope. One looked at all the equity programs for girls sponsored by USAID in Africa. The other reported on USAID programs in Ghana and Malawi. The latter study looked at urban/rural inequities as well as gender inequities, and found only minimal and unsuccessful efforts to improve urban/rural inequities.

USAID programs in Africa

In the 1980s, USAID linked its funding (in the form of non-project assistance, NPA) to policy and program changes in favor of girls' education. After several years, however, it was found that no single or universal policy lever will improve girls' educational participation. Local political and bureaucratic realities play a major role in affecting policy changes.

At the same time, gender activities developed as a part of project assistance have not been integrated or synchronized with other program interventions. Activities for girls have been segregated from other operations and did not build up support within ministry planning and budgeting processes.

It was concluded that girls' education should be addressed within an overall context of education reform.

Equity within specific country settings

This study reported four variables that seemed to influence the effectiveness of equity policies adopted in Ghana and Malawi: the timing of the policy reform in the political context of the country, government's attitudes toward donor interventions, the priority given to the policy reform by the government, and the process by which the policy was formulated.

The timing of gender policy reforms worked better in Malawi than in Ghana. Education officials in Ghana were preoccupied with the critical tasks required in rehabilitating a nearly defunct education system and were unwilling to create special programs for getting more girls into school. In Malawi, USAID benefited from dramatic political changes sweeping through the country to put gender equity on the policy agenda.

Regarding the timing of policy reforms, USAID met with resistance from Ghanaian officials, who had begun to develop a strong sense of their own agenda and a dislike for donor intrusion. They did not see gender equity as a high priority. In Malawi, government officials were ready to accept donor initiatives, and during the election of 1993, in the face of popular support for fee waivers for girls, they were happy to take credit for the policy.

The equity intervention supported by USAID/Ghana suffered because ministry officials recognized that USAID itself placed lower priority on equity than on quality and efficiency interventions. The equity intervention was small, limited to a remote geographic region, and did not lend itself to popular support. In contrast, USAID/Malawi clearly placed high priority on its gender equity interventions, and the policy reform gave politicians a tangible benefit to sell to the country.

Neither Malawi's new policy of allowing pregnant girls to attend school nor Ghana's limited pilot interventions to get more girls and rural children into schools were implemented to any significant degree. In both cases, authorities responsible for implementing the policy at the school level were not adequately brought into the process of formulating the policy. The pregnancy policy encountered obstacles to implementation at every level of the system; the pilot programs in Ghana had no enforcement power behind them.

What lessons were learned from these activities?

Both studies highlight the importance of *implementation* of policies. In particular, the use of non-project assistance to encourage policies of equity is wasted unless these policies are implemented.

Findings of the field study were not readily accepted at the mission level in Ghana and Malawi, primarily because the findings included some critical judgements of past performance.

What are the next steps to capitalize on the activity?

Two follow-up studies of the implementation of education reforms were started and are nearing completion. It is expected that the findings from these studies will further clarify approaches and methods for implementing and sustaining policy and program reforms.

Products

Wolf, Joyce M., *An Analysis of USAID Programs to Improve Equity in Malawi and Ghana's Education Systems*, SD Technical Paper 10, September 1995. Washington, DC: SD Publication Series, Office of Sustainable Development, Bureau for Africa.

Tietjen, Karen, *Educating Girls in Sub-Saharan Africa: USAID's Approach and Lessons for Donors*, Technical Paper No. 54, June 1997. Washington, DC: SD Publication Series, Office of Sustainable Development, Bureau for Africa.

Joyce Wolf and Martina Odonkor, *How Educating a Girl Changes the Woman She Becomes: An Intergenerational Study in Northern Ghana*, 1997. Washington, DC: SD Publication Series, Office of Sustainable Development, Bureau for Africa.

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Improving the Experience of Girls in the Classroom

Findings and Implications for Basic Education

Countries involved in this activity:
Malawi

What was the problem or gap being addressed?

Within broad-based efforts to improve girls' participation in school (to enroll more girls and help them complete a primary education), relatively little attention is given to changing teachers' attitudes and behavior toward girls. Little empirical research exists on how African teachers—men and women—treat girl students differently from boy students, although it is widely assumed that such differences work against the scholastic performance of girls. Nor has much guidance been given to those who would train and assist teachers in changing their behavior.

The purpose of the activity was to document how teachers interact with girls in the classroom, and to present guidance for teachers to monitor their classroom behavior with the intention of increasing support for girls' learning.

Research findings and usage

The analysts found many documented instances of girls suffering from the teacher's (conscious or unconscious) discrimination, including negative feedback, failure or refusal to recognize girls' class input, book allocation, and so on. They also found other factors that discourage girls from doing well in school—in Malawi it was revealed that girls sleep three or four hours less than boys.

Based on the research, AFR/SD developed a methodology known as Gender-based Approach to Planning (GAP) to help instructional planners avoid or resolve problems in the classroom that hinder girls' ability and opportunities to learn.

The Gender-based Approach to Planning included a manual for teachers, teacher trainers, and others who want to look at classrooms for the purpose of improving teacher-student interactions, particularly interactions with girls. The manual offers basic guidance in classroom ethnography: how to observe what takes place in a classroom and how to conduct Participatory Learning for Action activities that shed light on girls' experiences in the classroom. The manual was field tested in Malawi. Also, an eight-minute video, *A View from the School: Classroom Experience for Girls*, and an accompanying brochure were developed from tapes of teacher and student classroom activities and behaviors.

The USAID/Women in Development office has used this methodology in other projects. Also, the World Bank adopted the strategy to inform its own strategic planning to reduce classroom discrimination.

What lessons have we learned from this activity?

Videotapes that are to be widely disseminated need to be of high-quality. This lesson was fed into the production of the Education Sector Support videotape on Uganda.

Attention to issues, in this case classroom discrimination against girls, can be substantively enhanced by paying greater attention to targeted dissemination of materials. A dissemination strategy should include a realistic budget, targeted mailings, and follow-up with key individuals.

What are the next steps to capitalize on the activity?

The materials need broader dissemination, including to USAID missions. Training activities should be organized at the district level to encourage school officials to help teachers reduce discriminatory practices.

Products

Prouty, Diane, and Haddy Sey, *A View from the School: Classroom Experiences for Girls* (videotape and accompanying brochure), IEQ Project, 1996.

Miske, Shirley, and Diane VanBelle-Prouty, *Schools are for Girls Too: Creating an Environment of Validation*, SD Technical paper 41, 1997.

Prouty, Diane, and Haddy Sey, *IEQ Project Classroom Observations and Participatory Learning for Action Activities: A View to the Experiences of Girls*, June 1997.

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Improving the Health of School Children

Findings and Implications for Basic Education

Countries involved in this activity:
Ghana, Zambia

What was the problem or gap being addressed?

Nutritional status and health status are powerful influences on a child's learning capacity and on how well that child performs in school. Children who lack certain nutrients in their diet (particularly iron and iodine), or who suffer from protein-energy malnutrition, hunger, and parasitic infections or other diseases, do not have the same capacity for learning as healthy and well-nourished children. Weak health and poor nutrition diminish the cognitive development of school-age children through physiological changes and/or by reducing their ability to participate in learning experiences.

The purpose of this activity was to increase USAID's participation in the dialogue and actions of MOEs, the World Bank, UN organizations, bilateral donors, and NGOs working in school health and nutrition. This activity was charged with guiding USAID policy based on emerging evidence of effective, low-cost school-health interventions that improve the learning capacity of children. It also advocated for and facilitated new school-health activities in Africa.

Research findings

The evaluation in Ghana found a strong and positive effect of deworming and health education programs on children's achievement in school (measured by standardized tests). The effect was particularly strong for nutritionally disadvantaged children and for girls, especially adolescent girls. Attendance rates were not affected, however, and effects on persistence rates could not be determined.

In terms of health and nutritional outcomes, the deworming treatment resulted in sharp reductions in prevalence and intensity of schistosomiasis and hookworm, but little or no consistent reductions in ascaris, trichuris, or strongyloides (other worms). The treatments also appear to have positively affected the nutritional status of children, as measured by increases in their heights and weights.

What lessons were learned from this activity?

This activity has worked effectively in collaboration with the World Bank and other agencies as part of the International School Health Initiative (based at the World Bank). This collaboration has allowed USAID and the World Bank to coordinate technical resources in support of school-health activities, particularly in Ghana, Zambia, and Senegal.

Inter-agency policies on school-based health services have been formulated using empirical evidence from research and demonstration activities coordinated by the International School Health Initiative. To continue to advance this cutting-edge work, it is important that new programs coordinate research on service delivery systems and cognitive measurement tools with other agencies for maximum effectiveness and that new policies reflect the experience of previous interventions.

What are the next steps to capitalize on the activity?

- Encourage small-scale school-health activities by PVOs, NGOs, missions, and ministries of education to build understanding of school-health issues.
- Encourage the coordination of HIV/AIDS activities with larger school-health programs, providing a solid foundation for sexual education and life skills while also strengthening the strategic planning capacity for school health.
- Further document how children's cognitive abilities are improved by better nutrition and health care.
- Support networking between health and education NGOs.

Other suggestions are to (1) produce a video on school health, (2) tap private sector resources, such as Smithkline-Beecham's contributions for IEC campaigns in Zambia and Uganda, and (3) support a PVO/NGO working group on school health.

Products

Creative Associates International, *Lessons Learned on the Integration of Health, Population, Environment, Democratization, and Privatization into Basic Education Curriculum in Africa*. Washington, DC: USAID/ARTS, 1994.

Christopherson, Kaaren, *Education, Health/Nutrition/ Population Linkages: A Guide to Resources*, SARA Project, 1996. (A sourcebook of projects and programs, organizations and networks, and journal literature related to collaborative work between education and these sectors.)

Israel, Ronald C., *Nutrition, Health, and Learning in Africa*. Newton, MA: Action Group for International School Nutrition and Health, Education Development Center, 1996.

Levinger, Beryl, *Critical Transitions: Home to School*. Newton, MA: Action Group for International School Nutrition and Health, Education Development Center, 1996.

Moulton, Jeanne, *Collaborative Programs in Primary Education, Health, and Nutrition: Proceedings of a Collaborative Meeting*, Washington, DC, 1996, SD Technical Paper 38.

Moulton, Jeanne, *Using Schools to Improve Health: A Map of Informative Interventions*, SARA Project, 1996.

Seifert, Kim, *Early Intervention: HIV/AIDS Programs for School-aged Youth*, ABEL Project, 1997.

USAID/AFR/SD, "Improving Educational Quality and Equity Through School Health Interventions," Position Statement, 1997.

USAID/AFR/SD, "USAID/Africa Bureau, School Health and Nutrition Activities," 1998.

Williams, James H., and Kay Leherr, *Children's Health and Nutrition as Educational Issues: A Case Study of the Ghana Partnership for Child Development Intervention Research in the Volta Region of Ghana*. Washington, DC: Ghana Partnership for Child Development, Harvard Institute for International Development, 1997.

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Promoting Reform in Basic Education

Findings and Implications for Basic Education

Countries involved in this activity:
Benin, Guinea, Ghana, Malawi

What was the problem or gap being addressed?

The achievement of universal primary education has been a high priority for African nations since the era of Independence in the 1960s. Few countries, however, have reached this goal. In many countries, enrollment grew steadily during the 1960s and 1970s, but with the severe slump in the global economy, a consequent sharp decline in revenues of African governments, and continuing high rates of growth in population during the 1980s, enrollment rates declined during that decade. Primary school systems were inefficient, and, in many schools, the quality of instruction deteriorated.

The challenge was to discover and devise strategies that governments could use to tackle the interrelated problems of inadequate access, poor quality, inefficiency, poor management, and irrelevance of primary schooling. USAID determined that the best way to administer grants to African governments was through general budgetary support, conditional upon governments adopting specific reforms. This form of grant was known as non-project assistance. To take advantage of non-project assistance (NPA), and to best assist the implementation of reform, USAID education officers had to engage in the policy-making process and to understand policy options and strategies.

Through this activity, USAID's Africa Bureau Office of Sustainable Development (AFR/SD) sought to answer common questions about how to support reform: What is essential to reform primary education systems? Where have ministries of education experienced success? Where have obstacles seemed intractable? How can governments best use the assistance of international funding agencies?

Research findings

The research concluded the following about the effectiveness of conditional, non-project assistance:

- Accurate assessment of government commitment and capacity to carry out reforms is essential to determine whether non-project assistance is appropriate and how the assistance modality should be structured.
- A clear understanding of national objectives and stakeholder consensus on strategy are essential elements of successful educational reform.
- Getting the right mixture of non-project and projectized assistance must be based on an assessment of government commitment, resource availability, and institutional capacity.
- The mechanisms selected for providing budgetary support—general cash transfers, debt service repayments, cash transfers to special education accounts—have sustainability and management implications that may involve trade-offs.
- The principal responsibility for donor coordination should be with the government and the ministry of education. Donors should assist governments to develop mechanisms for donor management.

A preliminary assessment in four countries (Benin, Guinea, Ghana, Malawi) of the effectiveness of non-project assistance (NPA) in supporting education reforms found that NPA had had the desired effect, including—

- increasing education's share of government allocations and expenditures to desired levels;
- increasing primary education's share of the larger education budget; and
- increasing non-salary expenditures.

Other findings were less positive. For example—

- Increased expenditures on non-salary items did not necessarily yield improved programs.
- There were trade-offs in budgetary support. NPA forced governments to adjust their budgetary practices to improve support to education, but budget transactions were less auditable by USAID.
- NPA is premised on a country experiencing macroeconomic growth, which would allow it to pay off debts *and* budget more to education.
- Governments have faced political difficulties in reallocating money from other sectors, notably, from higher

education to primary education.
- Governments have had difficulty moving funds through the system quickly enough to absorb large chunks of NPA.
- NPA management requirements have sometimes overloaded the capacity of government officials.

Subsequent to the publication of *Basic Education in Africa: USAID's Approach to Sustainable Reform in the 1990s*, AFR/SD presented further conclusions about the conditions under which non-project and projectized assistance were useful.

NPA has been most useful when:
- a ministry has the capacity and structure to deliver education services;
- adequate government management and accounting systems are in place;
- the government is committed to supporting reforms and prepared to provide adequate public financing; and
- government and donors agree on performance conditions that reflect the country's education policy framework and strategy.

Project assistance has been most useful when:
- it is strategic and designed to support the provisions of services central to the educational reform;
- it focuses on strengthening institutional capacity to create better functioning systems; and
- it supports activities not routinely covered by the education budget.

What lessons were learned from this activity?

This activity demonstrated the need for a conceptual framework to guide sector support work. Sector reform works as a framework because it is not a linear approach but a process of interdependent activities that are mutually reinforcing. The process of developing sector reform has highlighted the importance of a Washington-field relationship in developing USAID policies and strategies. Another lesson is the importance of extensive planning and involvement of participants in planning for policy workshops.

What are the next steps to capitalize on the activity?

With the AFR/SD strategic framework developed, the focus should now move towards applying and operationalizing sector reform within country programs. AFR/SD needs to become more cognizant of the challenges to sector reform inherent in USAID contracting. Also, AFR/SD must push for clarification by USAID on the review and approval process for revising results frameworks, strategic objectives, and reporting processes (R4s). Until this is clear, it is difficult for AFR/SD to help missions use the strategic framework of sector reform in framing their objectives, indicators, and reports. In addition, AFR/SD needs to promote sector reform through various regional organizations, such as the Association for the Development of Education in Africa and its working groups, and to enlist USAID bilateral programs to help in this regard.

Products

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DeStefano, Joseph, and Karen Tietjen, *Budgetary Impact of Non-Project Assistance in the Education Sector: A Review of Benin, Ghana, Guinea, and Malawi*, 1996.

Tietjen, Karen, and Ash Hartwell, *USAID's Strategic Framework for Basic Education in Africa /Cadre Stratégique de L'USAID pour l'Education de Base en Afrique (Résumé)*, 1997.

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Gilmore, Julianne, *Phoenix Rising: Success Stories about Basic Education Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa/Le phénix renaissant: l'education en afrique*, 1997.

This brief is one of 13 summaries of fuller impact assessments prepared for USAID/AFR/SD SO 6 (Education). For a copy of the impact assessment upon which this summary is based, or for other assessments, contact the Support for Analysis and Research in Africa (SARA II) Project at the Academy for Educational Development.

Research to Determine How Education Affects Girls' Lives

Findings and Implications for Basic Education

Countries involved in this activity:
Ghana, Regional

What was the problem or gap being addressed?

Extensive survey research shows correlations between literacy rates of women and birth rates, and between literacy rates of women and rates of sickness and death of their children.

Educating girls is widely accepted as a critical link for health outcomes and economic and social development. "Literacy" is always measured in terms of how many years a girl has attended school. Many of these studies make no attempt, however, to explain the correlations. While some studies do look at the variables mediating literacy rates, birth rates, and morbidity/mortality rates, almost all such studies rely on survey data to establish conclusions using statistical analyses of data. Missing were ethnographic studies to magnify the intricate causal connections between a girls' education and her behavior as a wife and mother.

Research findings

The research added to the increasing body of literature that demonstrates the effects of basic education on how girls think about bearing and raising children. It supports earlier findings that the mediating variables between girls' education and their behavior as wives and mothers differ from one community to the next, as do the local cultural contexts.

A study in Ghana looked at evidence for three hypotheses on which mediating variables are important: age and type of marriage, empowerment, and information and skills.

1. The age of a girl at marriage was not a significant factor. Educated girls tended to become the first wives of their (polygamous) husbands and had a role in the decision to marry their husbands, rather than permitting an arranged marriage. Both factors seemed to give these women more decision-making authority within the household.

2. In terms of empowerment, education seems to give women greater confidence and the necessary skills to act on their own or to negotiate decision-making power in the domains where women have traditional power, such as fertility, care of children, and education of children. In contrast, education does not give women more power outside the household, since, in the Dagomba culture of the family studied, women already have a fair amount of autonomy in the larger community.

3. The basic knowledge and skills that a woman receives in school, such as reading, writing, and math, give her the ability to move in and out of the village. This includes making trips to clinics and hospitals and making better judgements on what health practices are safe and effective—often choosing those put forward by trained care givers rather than by traditional healers.

A second, more general, study looked at the evidence that non-formal education and participation in associations has the same empowering effects on girls and women as schooling has been demonstrated to have. Findings from this study include:

- Although there are no large-scale survey data on non-formal education, such as those that have been collected on schooling, isolated studies, a few of them quite rigorous, demonstrate that non-formal education deserves closer attention as an empowering process.

- More research is needed to define what happens in school regarding the empowerment of girls. Non-formal education and association settings seem to provide the same "modernizing" environments as schools do, thus having the same empowering effects.

What lessons were learned from this activity?

The interesting and potentially important findings from this activity remain to be effectively applied by USAID missions or ministries of education. Dissemination of and advocacy around the research findings need to grow. More efforts to involve missions in research, from design to dissemination, are needed. Also, in dissemination, a common vocabulary between researchers and policy and program specialists is needed to convey information.

What are the next steps to capitalize on the activity?

The next steps should be to repackage the researchers' conclusions and advocate more strongly for programs and/or activities both inside and outside the formal system that educate and empower women. A second step would be to pursue further research on the education-related mechanisms that empower women to gain a better understanding of how schooling empowers women and what other activities or environments might do the same.

Products

Wolf, Joyce, and Martina Odonkor, *How Educating a Girl Changes the Woman She Becomes: An Intergenerational Study in Northern Ghana*, ABEL Project, ABEL Technical Paper 8, 1998.

Moulton, Jeanne, *Formal and Nonformal Education and Empowered Behavior: A Review of the Research Literature*, SARA Project, 1997.

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